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Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification

Letter dated 1 August 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Paragraph 5 of your report (A/54/166), entitled "Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification", submitted to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly under item 68 of the preliminary list, states "With respect to the United Nations Special Commission, as of 16 December 1998, activities to verify Iraq's compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions ceased." Your report gives no reason for the cessation of the Special Commission's activities, nor does it mention the way in which those activities were carried out. With a view to clarifying the facts of this important matter, we should like to point out that the international agreements relating to disarmament, the guidelines and principles for the involvement of the United Nations, and your report (A/50/377), entitled "Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification", all affirm that verification can be defined as a process in which data are collected, collated and analysed in order to make an informed judgement as to whether a party is complying with its obligations. The guidelines also lay emphasis on a number of principles, including the principle that effective verification can be undertaken without necessarily compromising national secrets, that it is important to protect sensitive national installations and information, that care should be taken to prevent the abuse of verification, and that the economic, technological and social development of States should not be jeopardized. These principles guarantee the independence, impartiality, objectivity and professionalism of the verification process and put it in the correct legal framework, thereby upholding the rights of States and the credibility and impartiality of the United Nations.

If we examine, in the light of the above principles, the activities of the Special Commission and its various teams of inspectors and, in particular, those bearing American and British nationality, the following facts become clear:

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1. The concept of verification applied by the Special Commission, particularly since the end of 1993, is a concept quite distinct from that of inspection. Iraq fully cooperated in the process for as long as it was clear that the concept of verification was linked or limited to what was necessary for, and material to, the implementation of paragraph 22 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), leaving aside matters of secondary importance to be included in the permanent system of inspections. A framework for this system was set out in the Joint Programme of Action agreed between Iraq and the Special Commission on 22 June 1996. In paragraph 4 of that Programme, both sides concurred that work should concentrate on and be limited to fundamental areas related to the purposes of verification. Subsequently, however, the Special Commission arbitrarily exaggerated verification procedures with a view to finding some kind of organic relationship between verification and its claims relating to concealment. Such exaggeration, employed by the Special Commission in the final years of its work, not only exceeded the provisions of the Commission's mandate, but diverted it from the path it had previously pursued and made verification a cloak behind which the separate policies of one or two States well known for their antagonism towards Iraq could be concealed. This constituted a grave deviation from the specific mandate granted to the Special Commission pursuant to Security Council resolutions.

Not only did the Special Commission expand and extend the concept of verification in a manner that exceeded the provisions of its mandate, but it also deviated significantly from its previous course. Verification became a cloak behind which the sanctions imposed on Iraq could be prolonged and the political goals of the States known for their hostile policy towards Iraq could be achieved. This constituted a serious departure from the mandate given to the Special Commission pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

2. The American inspector Scott Ritter has admitted that:

(a) He visited Israel more than 30 times and exchanged information relating to the security of Iraq with the Israeli intelligence agencies;

(b) Other Special Commission inspectors had numerous meetings with those Israeli agencies and coordinated with them the information gathered during their work in Iraq;

(c) High-ranking officials in the United States administration directed the activities of the Special Commission in Iraq and obtained information from those activities that jeopardized the security of Iraq and its leadership and served the political goals of the United States of America, which were inimical to Iraq;

(d) Central Intelligence Agency operatives were included in the inspection teams wearing the blue helmet of the United Nations, and their aim was to conspire against Iraq and its leadership.

3. Under the supervision of American intelligence agencies, the Special Commission installed surveillance and interception equipment in order to monitor the movements of and contacts made by Iraqi officials.

4. Several inspectors working with the Special Commission were interviewed by foreign — in particular, American and British — television networks, and publicized secret information that jeopardized the security and national sovereignty of Iraq. Some Special Commission inspectors also published books and articles, largely of a political nature, intended to serve political goals antagonistic to Iraq and completely at odds with the nature of their work and their positions as international officials.

5. Richard Butler, former Executive Chairman of the Special Commission, on the orders of senior officials in the United States Administration, and without authorization from the Security Council or the Secretary-General of the United Nations, on two occasions withdrew

personnel from the Baghdad Monitoring and Verification Centre, the first being in November 1998 and the second in December 1998.

6. On 15 December 1998, Richard Butler, former Executive Chairman of the Special Commission, submitted to the Security Council a report that he had prepared in consultation with high-ranking officials in the United States Administration with a view to providing grounds for the launching of a military attack on Iraq by the United States and the United Kingdom on the night of 16 December 1998.

It is the United States of America which, having diverted the Special Commission from the duties mandated to it pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions, has killed, buried and destroyed the verification process, and set a shameful example with its violations of and contempt for the Charter of the United Nations and for the role played by the Security Council in international disarmament agreements and conventions.

7. In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation on 27 June 1999, the Secretary-General stated that there was some justification for allegations that United Nations weapons inspectors in Iraq were involved in spying for Washington. This statement confirms what was already public knowledge. Iraq had drawn attention to the situation, and warned of its dangerous consequences at the international level. The fact that the Special Commission had become a tool of the United States Administration, to be used at its whim in order to serve its interests, had done the United Nations considerable harm and would undermine future disarmament regimes. This was also confirmed by the Secretary-General in the aforementioned interview.

The facts set forth above confirm that the practices of the now defunct Special Commission have seriously damaged the credibility of the United Nations and its role in the field of verification. Considerable harm has also been done to Iraq by the United States' and the United Kingdom's exploitation of the Special Commission as a tool for espionage and aggression and in order to prolong the total embargo against Iraq.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly under item 68 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Saeed H. **Hasan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative